

## **Personal Assessment for Advocates Working with Victims of Sexual Violence**

The work of responding to sexual assault and helping survivors rebuild their lives is done by advocates in an array of organizational structures throughout the US and its territories. The work can be taxing, and sometimes it is difficult to know if you are maximizing all of your strengths in service to sexual assault survivors. To that end, The National Resource Sharing Project (RSP) and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) invite you to reflect on your skills, knowledge, values, agency support, and environment.

This assessment tool will help identify strengths and strategies to cultivate deeper and broader services for all victims of sexual assault. It will enable advocates to develop plans for enhancing or creating sexual assault services by expanding on their strengths.

### **How to Use this Assessment Tool**

Advocates can use this tool individually to assess the current state of their sexual assault services, their sexual assault knowledge, and their relationships with community partners. Agencies can have each staff member complete the assessment to form a picture of collective staff skills and areas for growth. The board of directors may also use the tool to assess their own level of knowledge regarding sexual assault and agency sexual assault services. State coalitions may use this tool to help their membership assess statewide sexual assault response and construct a statewide plan.

We recommend that advocates complete the tool on a regular basis to track progress and celebrate growth. If the tool is to be collected or used for purposes outside strategy and reflection, we recommend that this be discussed first. The tool was designed to encourage honesty and deep evaluation, and this work must happen in a trusting environment. The RSP and NSVRC will not collect any results from assessments.

This tool is broken down into four parts that focus on specific areas critical to effective sexual assault services. The first section examines your knowledge of sexual assault and traumatic impact. The second focuses on the skills of advocacy: providing options, working within the scope of your expertise, and accessing continuing education. The third section evaluates how you relate to the community concerning sexual assault services provision, your knowledge of sexual assault policies and procedures, and your support system for preventing and responding to vicarious trauma. The fourth section discovers your confidence in providing sexual assault services. Having training on an issue is not the same as having real life experience, and exploring the areas where you feel unsure can give guidance on where you must seek experience. Each section ends with reflection questions on strengths and areas of potential and brief action

planning. It is not necessary to collect and analyze any documentation for this assessment, though you are welcome to do so.

From these four aspects of advocacy, the advocate should be able to get a clear understanding of her/his ability to provide sexual assault services within a multi service organization. The length of time needed to complete this assessment will depend on the taker, from less than 20 minutes for some to an hour for others.

Each advocate operates in a unique environment with unique skills and resources. This assessment tool provides a roadmap for individualized growth that does not necessarily require expensive or complicated changes to your agency or your individual practice. Advocates and their agencies have used this tool to enhance sexual assault services using varied amounts of human and fiscal resources. While this assessment examines the individual advocate's response, the agency's collective knowledge and capacity to respond to sexual violence survivors is also important to consider and assess. An organizational assessment tool for dual/multi-service agencies to evaluate the overall agency response to serving victims of sexual violence is available at [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org). NSVRC, RSP, and your state, territorial or tribal coalition are available to assist you to as you implement enhanced services for victims of sexual violence.

*The National Sexual Assault Coalition Resource Sharing Project (RSP) is a collaborative project of Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, & Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. The RSP helps state sexual assault coalitions across the country access the resources they need in order to develop and thrive. The project provides technical assistance, support, and the dissemination of peer-driven resources for all state and territorial sexual assault coalitions utilizing peer-to-peer technical assistance and the voices of survivors as guiding principles. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center, founded by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, is the nation's principle information and resource center regarding all aspects of sexual violence. It provides national leadership, consultation, and technical assistance by generating and facilitating the development and flow of information on sexual violence intervention and prevention strategies. The NSVRC works to address the causes and impact of sexual violence through collaboration, prevention efforts and the distribution of resources.*

## Personal Assessment for Advocates working with Victims of Sexual Violence

This assessment is designed to help advocates evaluate their strengths and identify areas for enhancement. This is for your personal use and will not be shared with anyone unless you choose to share it. This tool is intended to help you grow, so there is no judgment here, only personal reflection and honesty.

**Consider your current level of knowledge, skill and readiness for each topic. Please mark each statement according to the following scale.**

**1-----2-----3-----4-----5**  
 This statement is not true This statement is true  
 I haven't taken action yet I take action, feel confident on this  
 I don't really know about this topic I have a lot of knowledge on this topic

Sexual Assault Knowledge	
1. I understand the prevalence of sexual victimization and can provide current information on the general frequency and facts surrounding sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
2. I understand the potential impact of sexual victimization and can explain it to community members if asked.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I can discuss sex comfortably. I am knowledgeable about sexual terms in both scientific terminology and common slang.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I understand and can provide core services to victims of sexual violence:	
a. I can provide crisis intervention for victims of sexual assault	1 2 3 4 5
b. I understand the services available in my community and can provide information and referrals to victims of sexual violence or their family, partners or friends.	1 2 3 4 5
c. I am confident in my general advocacy skills for victims of sexual assault.	1 2 3 4 5
d. I understand the screening process and can make appropriate referrals to therapy or support groups dedicated to sexual assault survivors as appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5
e. I know the basic elements of victim reactions and general sexual assault victim needs.	1 2 3 4 5
f. If called upon I am capable of being the voice for sexual assault victims at the table when community agencies or stakeholders gather.	1 2 3 4 5

**1-----2-----3-----4-----5**  
 This statement is not true  
 I haven't taken action yet  
 I don't really know about this topic

This statement is true  
 I take action, feel confident on this  
 I have a lot of knowledge on this topic

5. I am able to articulate how services may differ when working with victims who experience sexual violence in the context of intimate partner violence in comparison to those that do not.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I understand what culturally relevant services look like in my community:	
a. I have an awareness of the cultural diversity and demographics of my community, including communities of color, the LGBTQ community, and immigrant/refugee communities among others.	1 2 3 4 5
b. I have an understanding of prevalence, differences, risk factors and the effects of sexual violence in underserved populations in my community.	1 2 3 4 5
c. I know what culturally specific outreach is and how to do it within or with these communities.	1 2 3 4 5
d. I feel that I have the appropriate training and skills to provide culturally relevant services.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>What do you feel your strengths are in this section?</b>	
<b>Where do you feel challenged?</b>	
<b>Action Steps for this section:</b>	

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

This statement is not true  
 I haven't taken action yet  
 I don't really know about this topic

This statement is true  
 I take action, feel confident on this  
 I have a lot of knowledge on this topic

<b>Sexual Assault Survivor Advocacy</b>	
7. I understand how multiple systems (criminal justice, advocacy and health care) operate in regards to sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
8. I possess the knowledge to increase all <i>medical options</i> for victims of sexual violence	1 2 3 4 5
9. I possess the knowledge to increase all <i>criminal justice options</i> for victims of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
10. I possess the knowledge to increase all <i>civil legal options</i> for victims of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
11. I have received specific advocacy training on sexual assault.	1 2 3 4 5
12. I exercise initiative to obtain the necessary training to aid individuals who have experienced sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
13. I am able to assess and ask appropriate questions regarding the impact of sexual victimization throughout the survivor's life.	1 2 3 4 5
14. When a person presents as a victim of domestic violence, I have the ability to accurately screen and effectively respond to any experience s/he may have had of sexual violence within the context of the intimate partner relationship.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>What do you feel your strengths are in this section?</b>	
<b>Where do you feel challenged?</b>	
<b>Action Steps for this section:</b>	

**1-----2-----3-----4-----5**  
 This statement is not true  
 I haven't taken action yet  
 I don't really know about this topic

This statement is true  
 I take action, feel confident on this  
 I have a lot of knowledge on this topic

<b>Systems</b>	
15. I discuss sexual violence with community partners who provide services to sexual violence survivors, such as health care, law enforcement, and educators.	1 2 3 4 5
16. I have a support system in place within my agency to assist me with any vicarious trauma I may suffer as a result of my working with victims of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
17. I understand my agency's policies and procedures regarding services for sexual violence survivors.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>What do you feel your strengths are in this section?</b>	
<b>Where do you feel challenged?</b>	
<b>Action Steps for this section:</b>	

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

This statement is not true  
 I haven't taken action yet  
 I don't really know about this topic

This statement is true  
 I take action, feel confident on this  
 I have a lot of knowledge on this topic

<b>Personal Confidence in Providing Sexual Assault Advocacy Services</b>	
18. I have confidence in my <i>judgment</i> in working with victims of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
19. I am confident in my <i>skills</i> and <i>ability</i> to provide services to victims of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5
20. I have gotten enough experience serving victims of sexual violence to feel comfortable and confident in my abilities.	1 2 3 4 5
21. I am willing, able and comfortable in serving any victim of sexual violence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girl: female child less than 13 years of age</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boy: male child less than 13 years of age</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen girl: female between the ages of 13 and 18</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen boy: male between the ages of 13 and 18</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult man who is a survivor of child sexual assault</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transgender person</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a disability (cognitive, physical, and/or developmental)</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult or teen using drugs/alcohol, self-injury or other such coping mechanisms to deal with sexual assault</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 5
22. I feel capable of serving anyone who presents as a secondary victim (significant other, partner, family, friend, etc.) of sexual violence.	1 2 3 4 5

<b>What do you feel your strengths are in this section?</b>
<b>Where do you feel challenged?</b>
<b>Action Steps for this section:</b>

Take a few moments to think about the entire process, and jot a few notes while your thoughts are still fresh. Put the whole picture together as an action plan, as you consider the following questions.

Something new you learned about yourself:

Identify a strength you can draw on as you address one of your challenges:

Overall impressions from the assessment:

*This project was supported by Grant No. 2008-TA-AX-K043 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.*

Distribution Rights: This tool may be reprinted in its entirety or excerpted with proper acknowledge to the author(s), but may not be altered or sold for profit.